

# FEMA *impact*

A newsletter for the employees of FEMA

Vol. 4 No. 1 May/June 2001

## Director's *Message*

Well, it certainly didn't take long. The ink was hardly dry on my confirmation papers when Washington State rocked and rumbled with the nation's most destructive earthquake since Northridge. I visited the stricken areas that first day of the incident and while the destruction was painful to see, I was gratified both by the relative lack of damage and the low death and injury toll. I was also extremely gratified by the professional and prompt FEMA response. It's clear that you know what you are doing.

Continued page 8



Photo by Doug Hill

FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh makes remarks during his swearing-in ceremony, at FEMA headquarters. Left to right is: Alberto Gonzales, counsel to the President, President Bush, Commerce Secretary Donald Evans and Diane Allbaugh.

## *What's Inside*



Page 2 . . FEMA News Briefs

Page 3 . . . . Director's Travels

Page 4 . . . . . Hurricane Predictions

Page 4. . . . . TSP Changes

Page 5 . . . . Olympic Support

Page 6 . . HQ Building News

Page 7 . . . . . FEMA Profile

Page 8 . . . . . Earthquake Mitigation

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Contact: Holly Harrington

(202) 646-2996  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472





# FEMA NEWS BRIEFS

**Washington, D.C.** — FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh, in acknowledgement of the work of the nation's firefighters, was successful in reinstating \$100 million in grant assistance for fire departments originally not part of the FY 2002 budget request. "As our nation's first responders to disasters, the fire service community deserves FEMA's support and the continuation of this vital program acknowledges their important role," Allbaugh said. The grant program is in its first year and FEMA began accepting applications from fire departments on April 2. The program funds grants for training, wellness/fitness, vehicles, firefighting equipment, personal protective equipment and fire prevention programs.



**Tupelo, Mississippi** — Disaster recovery efforts have hit the road, as a mobile recovery center began touring some of the state's tornado disaster counties in March. The area suffered storm damage on Feb. 16 and 24. The mobile center, a satellite-equipped FEMA bus, will be the sixth recovery center established in the field to advise residents on obtaining aid.



**Washington, D.C.** — FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh signed the final rule to implement the Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act, and submitted the rule to the Federal Register for publication during the week of March 19. "President Bush's intent is for FEMA to provide the best possible service to the victims of the fire, and we believe this document addresses many of the concerns in the community," Allbaugh said. The final rule leaves most provisions of the interim final rule unchanged. One change, however, allows individuals and businesses to receive a lump sum payment for incidental expenses, up to a maximum of \$15,000 per business or household. This is an increase from the previously announced policy of a maximum payment of \$3,000. The new rule also provides the Cerro Grande Fire Claims Office with additional flexibility to resolve claims quicker, and with less documentation, where appropriate.



**Washington, D.C.** — The Justice Department cited FEMA and six other federal agencies for their exemplary work involving Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). FEMA had used ADR to determine who and how much to pay for debris removal work done after Hurricane Georges. Without a consensual resolution, expensive and time-consuming litigation involving all parties to the numerous contracts was likely, said Cindy Mazur, FEMA's ADR specialist.

# Allbaugh 'gets his feet wet' with tours of disaster sites

**Director gets a look at the devastating effects of water, fire and earth**

In mid-April, FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh saw firsthand what FEMA's all about. He traveled through flood-threatened parts of the midwest then headed to the shattered communities of Washington State before flying to New Mexico to see where fire devastated a whole community.

But it wasn't all bad news.

In Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, North Dakota and Minnesota communities that straddle the Red River, he saw flood waters held back by dikes and saw FEMA mitigation funds at work when he visited neighborhoods relocated out of the flood zone.

"I'm surprised there isn't more damage," he said.

While along the Red River, the new FEMA Director praised community officials for the lessons learned from past floods,

and congratulated them on jobs well done.

"What impressed me most during my visit was the spirit and determination of the people I met," Allbaugh said.

In Olympia, Washington, where an earthquake struck in February, Allbaugh spent time visiting with FEMA staffers at the Disaster Field Office.

"I wanted all of you to know how proud the President is of the work you are doing," Allbaugh said in an all-hands meeting at the DFO. "You have set a precedent

here for responding to disasters in this country."

Later, Allbaugh toured the construction site at the Fourth Avenue Bridge, which was severely

damaged by the earthquake.

Finally, Allbaugh headed south. He visited the Cerro Grande Fire Claims Office, was briefed about a dam project, spoke with community leaders and awarded \$13 million in mitigation funds. ▲



Photo by Barb Starnes

*Director Allbaugh visits the Lincoln Park Dike in Grand Forks, with officials, the media and residents.*



Photo by Donald Eaton

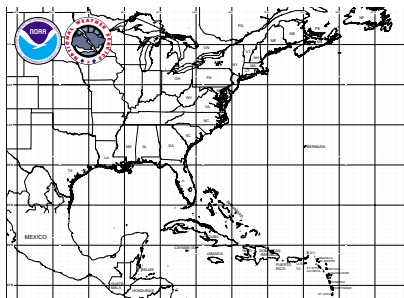
*Director Joe M. Allbaugh shakes hands with a staffer at the Olympia, Wash., Disaster Field Office.*



Photo by Andrea Booher

*Director Joe M. Allbaugh visits with Los Alamos residents.*

# The 2001 hurricane predictions reflect a busy season ahead



Professor William Gray, the Colorado meteorologist who issues annual hurricane predictions, let loose with his crystal ball at the 2001 Hurricane Conference held in Washington in April. His prediction? Ten named storms, two of them “only” tropical storm strength and two of them major hurricanes.

He also gave a 65 percent chance that at least one of the two major hurricanes would hit land. In addition, he said the models show all should form and travel in the Atlantic.

This overall number is slightly less severe than in years past, though the greater than 50-50 change of landfall is chilling.

Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center, said in his speech at the hurricane conference that the U.S. is definitely moving into a period of more active tropical storm activity.

At the same time, he cautioned, the absolute number of storms each season is not the most important issue. In a season like last year’s, for example, there were quite a few storms, some quite large, but virtually all missed the U.S.

Mayfield said it’s wise to

remember that in 1992, when Andrew caused such devastation, there were only six storms, and in 1935, the year of the terrible Labor Day storm, there were also only six storms.

“It’s not just numbers. Let’s not forget the basic hurricane program message — we want people to have their own plans and to be ready for hurricane season,” he said.

The hurricane conference, which included exhibits and training sessions and panels with many FEMA officials, also featured an opening session speech by Director Joe M. Allbaugh.

He spoke about the population growth along vulnerable coastlines and FEMA’s new evacuation liaison position, as well as the need for shared responsibility in hurricane preparedness, response and risk reduction.

“As we go forward with an ever-growing population living in these vulnerable coastal areas, our charge is clear,” he told the packed audience. “We must work together to ensure the best possible outcome. With the technology and knowledge we have, the capability exists to change the outcome for the better.” ▲

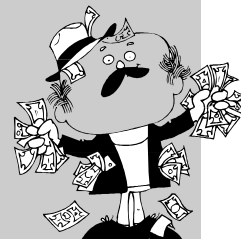
## TSP changes on tap

Effective May 1, 2001, participants in the Thrift Savings Plan can begin investing in the Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment Fund (S) and the International Stock Index Investment Fund (I). These two new funds are in addition to the Common Stock Index Investment Fund (C), the Fixed Income Index Investment Fund (F) and the Government Securities Investment Fund (G), which have been the only investment options available until now.

Employees can also begin using the new TSP-50 form to request TSP contribution allocations and interfund transfers, in addition to efficient electronic media transfer requests.

Other changes to TSP include an increase in the TSP contribution limit, beginning in July 2001 and increasing by 1 percent for each year through 2006. Open season for TSP will run from May 15 through July 31, 2001.

For more information about these changes or to obtain the TSP-50 form, go to [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) or call the Thriftline at 504-255-8777. ▲





# Going for the gold

## ***FEMA prepares for Salt Lake City's 2002 Winter Olympic Games***

by Jim Chesnutt

More than 1,500 emergency responders from more than 60 federal, state and local agencies participated in a training exercise in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 4 and 5, in anticipation of the 2002 Winter Olympics. The exercise spared virtually no emergency — it featured a mock train derailment, bomb threats, a hostage situation and the detonation of a radiological device.

“We certainly don’t expect problems of this scale during the games, but we have to be prepared for the worst possible scenario,” said Utah Commissioner of Public Safety Robert Flowers.

Timely response to natural disasters or manmade emergencies is critical, which is why FEMA is actively involved in training exercises and planning for the next Olympics. FEMA was also involved in preparation before the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

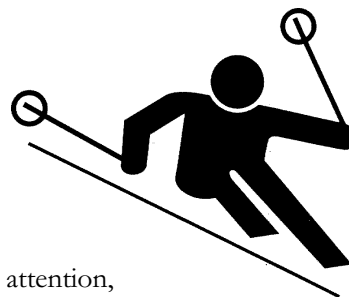
Local, state and federal officials have been planning and preparing for the event for the past four years. The April exercise provided a unique opportunity for agencies and organizations to work together to improve coordination and hone their response plans.

During the Olympics, FEMA will be responsible for consequence management with a focus on planning for any type of emergency that exceeds local and state capabilities.

“Officials have contingency plans for a broad spectrum of possible emergencies,” said Doug Gore, acting director for FEMA Region VIII. “While planning and preparations

for terrorist and other man made emergencies receives a great deal of attention, FEMA’s focus includes planning for winter storms common in the Wasatch Mountains, possible hazardous materials accidents and the ever-present potential for earthquakes along the Wasatch Front.”

The 2002 Winter Olympics will be one of the largest peacetime events in the history of the United States. During the 16-day run, the games will draw an estimated 3,700 athletes, officials



*As part of the exercise, students acting as mock victims of a radiological explosion are decontaminated by firefighters.*



from 80 nations and more than 70,000 visitors per day from across the globe.

The Olympics is also expected to attract about 15,000 members of the worldwide media and approximately 1 billion television viewers. ▲

*Jim Chesnutt is in Region VIII's Public Affairs Office*

# Plans for new headquarters building proceed, with changes

## *Space decisions and design phases come next*

Several months after signing the lease for the new FEMA headquarters building, some changes are being made to the original project plans. According to Bruce Campbell, adjustments, which are to be expected, include changing the amount of space dedicated to circulation and functions, reducing some conference space and executive office sizes, and eliminating duplicate training rooms.

Some of the changes resulted from concerns by employees. FEMA officials, the Management Council and the union president, met in February to review, discuss and agree on the revised organizational placement concept.

Other changes to the original building plan include deleting the auditorium and placing most shared use conference space on the first floor. Instead of the auditorium, conference space, training rooms and space for a larger multipurpose room will be located together and should provide maximum flexibility for meetings or training events of all sizes.

The General Services Administration has estimated that the re-review of the organizational placement plan delayed the project by about four weeks. It's expected that FEMA will move into the building by April 2003.

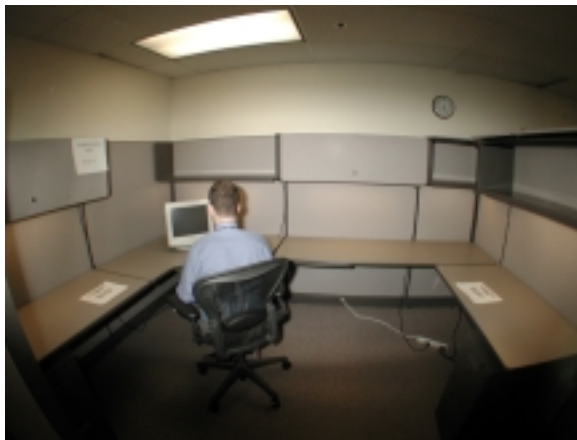
Focus has now moved to the space planning phase, said Campbell.

"We found that the actual building configuration, including dimensions, column placement and exterior wall perimeter have impacted the specific requirements to the point that they will not fit as originally described," he said. "This is not out of the ordinary in large space management projects such as this."

The following phase will focus on design. By May the building will be completely vacated and demolition of internal and external walls, building features and support systems will begin. The entire building will be gutted, the exterior removed, new floors added and new floor space added on all the west and south sides of the building. Final design documents are expected in late summer.

Campbell said that many employees are asking about commercial parking, a full-service cafeteria and child care facilities that might be contained in the building. However, the small number of FEMA staff in the building means that such facilities would need to be open to the public to be cost effective, which defeats the driving force for the relocation — the safety

and security of employees. Parking will be for employees only and at similar rates as in the current building Campbell said, and the possibilities of exercise facilities and other amenities are being discussed. ▲



*A FEMA headquarters employee takes the display cubicle for a "test drive." The workstations were set up in March to give employees a feel for the two size options -- 80 square feet and 72 square feet.*

Photo by Lauren Hobart

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***Parking will be for employees only and the possibilities of exercise facilities and other amenities are being discussed, said Bruce Campbell.***

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# **FEMA Profile: Michael Brown**

**T**hey both grew up in rural Oklahoma, one from a family of farmers and one from a family of ranchers. They both went to college in the state and later worked for state government. Both were active in politics and shared similar values. Their paths have been crossing for more than 20 years.

And now they have offices down the hall from each in a building just blocks from the U.S. Capitol.

"We have a lot of the same background," said Michael Brown, the new general counsel and the first political appointee brought on by new FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh. "We've known each other a long time."

Brown said he's happy to be at FEMA, working for his friend and seeing the federal government from the inside. He's pleasantly surprised by the view.

"I see people who

are dedicated, people who work hard," he said. "I see people who really seem to have two goals in mind: to make the agency a success and to make me and the director a success."

Brown comes to FEMA with a broad range of legal experience, including serving as a bar examiner on ethics and professional responsibility and as a hearing officer for the Colorado and Oklahoma Supreme courts, working as a special prosecutor appointed by the Police Civil Service Commission in internal affairs, conducting labor relations and contract negotiations, and experience in arbitration and criminal jury trials.

He also has experience in energy, insurance, land use and environmental law, as well as in drafting legislation and managing campaigns. Brown spent two years as an advisor to the Oklahoma State Senate's Finance Committee and three years as public administrator for

Edmond, Oklahoma, where he co-founded joint public-private partnerships for economic development.

It's all coming in handy at FEMA, he said.

"Before I got here I was asked, 'What do FEMA lawyers do?' Now I know it's everything you can think of," he said.

Legal matters he's faced in

his first few weeks include employment, real estate, contract and tort law and labor issue — just as in a general practice.

And just as in private practice, he sees the directorates as his clients and his job as knowing everything about the



*Michael Brown*

clients' business and supporting them in meeting their goals. He also sees his job as supporting Allbaugh.

"I need to see what I can do to help him, and what I can do to protect him and help him implement what he wants to implement," Brown said. "I'm happy to be here having an impact on people's lives and getting to work with Joe." ▲

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***"I see people who really seem to have two goals in mind: to make the agency a success and to make the director a success."***

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# Taking earthquake mitigation steps in Washington State keep youngsters safe

by Katheryn Wilbrecht



A daycare worker shows how the cribs are secured to save lives during earthquakes.

When the Nisqually Earthquake hit Feb. 28, the children of the Little Church on the Prairie Learning Center in Lakewood, Washington, were protected from falling objects because the center had mitigated the facility with FEMA assistance.

During the temblor, teachers gathered children under a large table and watched the effect of their work.

"Nothing fell over, because of our preventive measures," said Pat Ivy, the center's director. "It was amazing."

Last September, volunteers from the University of Puget Sound and Pacific Lutheran University and staff members of the Pierce County Emergency Management Department worked with FEMA hazard mitigation officials to make sure the daycare center was safe in the event of an earthquake.

**"Nothing fell over, because of our preventive measures. It was amazing."**

Mitigation measures included bolting cribs to the walls and strapping water heaters, television sets and computers in place. Volunteers also mounted protective sheathing on light fixtures to keep lights from falling.

The project was funded in part with FEMA Hazard Mitigation funds, while Puget Sound Energy and Key Bank of Lakewood supplied financial support and the hot water strapping.

Ivy had not planned on mitigating her center when first approached by disaster officials, but when she was told the center was located in a seismic zone, she chose to proceed with the program.

Though the center suffered some external structural damage, not a single child inside was injured. ▲

*Katheryn Wilbrecht is a Disaster Assistance Employee in Region X.*

## **Director cont.**

I'd like to echo the praise given FEMA employees by President Bush, when he visited headquarters in March, for my swearing in. He called the agency "effective" and the employees "dedicated" with "an ethic of professionalism and a willingness to . . . help people in need."

I concur. I am proud to have become part of the FEMA family. What I have seen so far, in Washington State, in Arizona, at Mt. Weather, at headquarters and in the regions is impressive.

In the weeks and months ahead, I will be building on FEMA's past success to ensure future success, and to further strengthen the agency's credibility and ability. Together, we will set new and ever higher goals, and together we will achieve them.

Thank you for your support for me in these initial months. I know I can count on you in all the future disasters that we will meet together. ▲